PLAYING MUSIC: A CURRICULAR OUTLINE FOR MUSIC LEARNED THROUGH IMPROVISATORY GAMES

by

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Play is a crucial part of early childhood development and also a critical element in music making. Early childhood educators and researchers have acknowledged play as an important part of educating young children, but play is often undiscussed in the context of early childhood music education and music education in general. Although researchers have addressed the importance of guided and unguided musical play (John et al., 2016; Berger & Cooper, 2003; Koops & Taggart, 2011) and improvisation (Hickey, 2009, 2015; Hickey et al., 2016), opportunities for music students and pre-service music teachers to engage in musical play and improvisation remain limited (Healy, 2014; Madura Ward-Steinman, 1999; Monk, 2013; Ott, 2015). However, a curriculum that uses a foundation of musical play to engage students in improvisatory music making had not yet been created. The purpose of this practicum was to create eight lesson plans that use games to engage students in structured and unstructured musical play. These lessons were designed with the intent that they accompany education students receive in an instrumental curriculum as outlined by the National Association for Music Education (2014). The goals of these lessons were to investigate and re-contextualize the operative word "play" in music education and supply opportunities for students to improvise through play.

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Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem

Rationale

Play is a crucial part of early childhood development and also a critical element in music making. Early childhood educators and researchers have acknowledged play as an important part of educating young children, but play is often undiscussed in the context of early childhood music education and music education in general. In a discipline directed by standards, traditional stakeholders, and an educative experience centered on evaluation and assessment, playful music-making experiences are rarely an opportunity. There is a need for a music curriculum that utilizes play as a more informal mode of music-making.

Researchers have addressed the importance of musical play in a child's musical development through investigations of guided/structured and unguided/free musical play. Guided musical play can consist of musical games and activities that the teacher directs through to the end, while free musical play can comprise of activities that are led by the child's exploration (Berger & Cooper, 2003). Berger and Cooper (2003) created a 10-week music education program in which play activities were used to observe how children explore sound. They found that children need uninterrupted access to musical materials in an environment and time for play episodes. Play was extinguished when adults corrected or criticized children's musical activities.

In a case study of early childhood classes, John et al. (2016) used a variation of musical games and movement games, as well as compositional and improvisational activities, to engage children between four and six years of age in episodes of musical play. They found that free musical play allowed for students to engage in social and shared regulation behaviors while eliciting

positive emotions. Their findings revealed that free musical play can enhance musical communication through nurturing children's abilities to listen and respond with music instead of verbal language.

In an article that presented a rationale for developing a playful music education for pre-service music teachers, Koops and Taggart (2011) argued that play can also be beneficial for adult learners. They suggested that stress and in-service teacher job dissatisfaction can be diminished through play. They argued that pre-service music teachers must have opportunities to engage in play in order to model and facilitate a playful music education for their students.

Improvisation may be one the most natural forms of creating and performing music. As Bailey (1992) aptly wrote, “Historically, [improvisation] pre-dates any other music—mankind’s first musical performance couldn't have been anything other than a free improvisation…” (p. 83). Despite humans’ innate tendency to freely improvise music, the majority of music students spend a great deal of their music education learning about, practicing, performing, and interpreting music composed with Western-classical notation. In the pursuit of learning composed music, students are rarely given an opportunity to explore their creative individuality via free musical improvisation. Although the National Association for Music Education (2014) placed an emphasis on teaching improvisation, public schools are still lacking opportunities for music students to freely improvise (Bernhard & Stringham, 2016; Brophy, 2002; Snell, 2013; Ward-Steinman, 2007).

Much of the literature written on improvisation in music education focuses on general music teachers and curriculum (Beegle, 2010; Brophy, 2005; Gruenhagen & Whitcomb, 2014; Whitcomb, 2013). This emphasis on general music is likely due to teaching approaches that incorporate improvisation, such as the Orff Schulwerk and Dalcroze methods. On the other hand,

free improvisation requires minimal technical skill or theoretical knowledge, making it an ideal gateway into music for young musicians.

Aside from simple improvisation skills learned in general music programs, the American-born jazz style is the predominant foundation of improvisation for music education and is also an area of focus in many research studies (Madura Ward-Steinman, 2007, 2008; Wehr-Flowers, 2006). Music programs have recently begun to adopt rock and hip-hop into the curriculum, which are offsprings of jazz; however, these styles of music do not often provide students with the chance to express their own originally conceived music in a conversational manner with their peers and teacher(s) (Kanellopoulos, 2011).

Although there are many creative ways to incorporate improvisation activities into ensembles that traditionally perform Western-classical music, researchers suggests that music teachers are ill-equipped to supply students with experiences in improvisation (Healy, 2014; Madura Ward-Steinman, 1999; Monk, 2013; Ott, 2015). Likewise, Sarath (1996) and Palmer (2014) have identified a need to integrate improvisation into collegiate music theory courses as a vehicle to demonstrate mastery of the concepts learned. The sheer number of books that Agrell (2008, 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2014) has published on the subject of improvisation for the non-improvising musician indicates that musicians have numerous resources for investigating purely creative music-making activities. These volumes contain hundreds of creative exercises, prompts, and ideas for musicians to find joy, value, and play in the act of improvisation.

Since the 1960s there has been a resurgence of interest in free improvisation, and studies have begun to address the opportunities that free improvisation has to offer for music education. Creative agency, informal teaching methods, and dialogical and democratic pedagogical tech-

niques are among the domains that free improvisation can have a strong impact in music education (Hickey, 2009, 2015; Hickey et al., 2016; Kanellopoulos, 2011; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010). Hickey (2009) discussed how the music education community's drive to include improvisation is limited in its approach and argued that music teachers should facilitate experiences for students to freely improvise. This is because *teaching* free improvisation through *transmission* is not possible. She outlined the importance of students having the opportunity to play music freely and called for a balance between freedom and structure within the music classroom. Hickey used Pressing's (1987) stages of improvisation and continuum of teaching to place pedagogical texts and curriculum related to improvisation on a spectrum ranging from structured to free. The stages were in the following order: stage 1, embellishment; stage 2, patterns and models; stage 3, problem-solving; stage 4, play-by-ear; and stage 5, free improvisation. After surveying 20th century methods of teaching improvisation, Hickey questioned whether teacher preparation courses actually encourage and facilitate free play.

Hickey (2015) conducted a multiple case study to investigate common elements of pedagogical techniques among four free-improvisation instructors at the college level in order to inform K-12 music teaching. The four free-improvisation pedagogues were prolific teachers and performers and were interviewed and observed to find common themes among their teaching. Data collection consisted of interview transcripts and field notes, recordings, course materials, and other documents (syllabi, university catalogues/texts, and press material). The commonalities that emerged among the four pedagogues were unique teacher tools, use of nontraditional vocabulary, the establishment of a safe and democratic environment, lack of evaluation, leader as a guide, comfort with spontaneity, and pedagogue as improviser. Hickey (2015) suggested that

these themes found in a free improvisation ensemble can be used by K-12 music teachers to influence creative and egalitarian pedagogical practices which emerge from the freedom of the music-making itself.

Although researchers have addressed the importance of guided and unguided musical play (John et al., 2016; Berger & Cooper, 2003; Koops & Taggart, 2011) and improvisation (Hickey, 2009, 2015; Hickey et al., 2016), opportunities for music students and pre-service music teachers to engage in musical play and improvisation remain limited (Healy, 2014; Madura Ward-Steinman, 1999; Monk, 2013; Ott, 2015). However, a curriculum that uses a foundation of musical play to engage students in improvisatory music making has yet to be created.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this practicum was to create eight lesson plans that use games to engage students in structured and unstructured musical play. These lessons were designed with the intent that they accompany education students receive in a typical instrumental music curriculum as outlined by the National Association for Music Education (2014). The goals of these lessons were to investigate and re-contextualize the operative word "play" in music education and supply opportunities for students to improvise through play.

Delimitations

The lesson plans in this practicum were designed for elementary school students ranging from 10 to 14 years of age. Through the use of musical games that encourage an improvisatory approach to music, these lessons focused on using an exploratory play-centered approach to music making.

Definitions of Terms

Free improvisation: “Improvised music without any rules beyond the logic or inclination of the musician(s) involved. The term can refer to both a technique (employed by any musician in any genre) and as a recognizable genre in its own right.” (Hickey et al., 2016, p. 128)

Improvisation: Originally conceived music that is spontaneously created as a response of an external stimulus such as a prompt, picture, or idea.

Play: To “engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose.” (Play, n.d., Oxford University Press)

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

This chapter presents research studies that have examined the benefits of play in education, structured and unstructured musical play in music education, and improvisation in music education.

Play in Education

Play has been studied by notable early childhood researchers such as Parten (1933), Piaget (1962), and Vygotsky (1967). Vygotsky (1967) found that play activities have a strong influence on children's development, and intrinsically motivate actions throughout the learning process. In this way, play can emphasize a process or journey as a goal of music education rather than a product.

Other early childhood researchers, such as Bredekamp and Copple (2002), found that children's learning and development occur through windows of play. Elkind (2007) thought that it was possible to bring playful, creative perspectives to activities and assignments that are viewed as ‘work’. The author expressed a concern that play could be suppressed in the "service of work for both children and adults" (p. 218).

Brown (2009) stressed the importance of play in learning and was concerned that some disparage play as solely entertainment. Play was also found to stimulate nerve growth in areas of the brain where emotions are processed and executive decisions are made (Brown, 2009). There is physiological evidence that play enhances learning and thinking for people across a wide gamut of ages. Playful activities result in learning and contextualizes information learned in a way that makes transfers more meaningful to the learner. Perhaps more importantly, play also encourages improvisatory thinking that can be situated in flexible and social contexts. Brown (2009) also argued that creativity and self-actualization can be achieved through play.

Blatner and Blatner (1988) argued that many students will be inhibited to pursue playful activities in the classroom because they do not have models of playful adults. Due to this, music educators should feel free to engage in play as well, creating opportunities to play for and with students. Koops and Taggart (2011) suggested that teachers can engage in play in many forms, including "role-playing, use of humor, writing and use of jokes, brainstorming, and use of games" (p. 7).

Structured and Unstructured Musical Play in Music Education

Music teaching approaches such as Orff-Schulwerk (Frazee & Kreuter, 1987) and Music Learning Theory (Valerio et al., 1998) have incorporated play into pedagogy and curriculum for children. Research investigating play in music education or "musical play" can be categorized as that which is focused on structured/guided or unstructured/free musical play. However, there are studies that explore a hybrid form of musical play, combining elements of structured and unstructured activities.

John et al. (2016) designed a music program and an exploratory case study that focused on an ethnographic approach of non-participant observations of two early childhood music classes within a community music school with students that represented of "culturally diverse" populations. Participants were 33 children between four and six years old from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Data collection methods used were video recordings, direct observations, transcriptions of observations, anecdotal notes, and an interview with the teachers. The researchers conducted observations over a period of five months. Observations consisted of two 60-minute classes on Saturday afternoons. Approximately 18 hours of video footage were transcribed, analyzed, and coded. The researchers' questions were: 1) What forms of musical play are elicited in

this creativity-focused approach to early childhood music classes; and 2) What tools of learning emerge from these forms of musical play?

The researchers found that the various forms of musical play revealed a wide range of music making opportunities. The children were presented with the same hello and goodbye songs every week, followed by miscellaneous combinations of musical games and movement games as well as musical play through spontaneous improvisation, guided composition, and free exploration. Three distinct categories of musical play emerged: ritual, creative musical play, and guided musical play. Guided musical play included musical games and movement activities that the teacher initiated and concluded. Creative musical play involved free exploration, spontaneous improvisation, and guided composition through graphic scores that the children performed. Ritual musical play consisted of the hello and goodbye songs that initiated and concluded every class.

Creative musical play was initiated either by the teacher or the student but followed through by the child. The teacher would begin by demonstrating how to play the instruments, then would lead a discussion about how sounds were produced on each instrument. The child was invited to explore the instrument of their choice after the teacher introduced, discussed, and provided an opportunity to experiment with the sounds of all the instruments. A distinction was made between guided musical play and creative musical play; guided musical play could be facilitated by any adult while creative musical play necessitated the presence of someone with musical knowledge.

Each form of musical play elicited a significant variety of emotional responses. John et al. (2016) found that the more prescribed the activity, the less positive effect was achieved. The ritual songs elicited the least positive responses, creative musical play elicited the most positive

emotions, and guided musical play was situated in the middle. In addition to exciting emotional responses, social responses were also evoked by all forms of musical play. Self-regulation and shared-regulation (regulation with others) were two social behaviors observed in this study. Creative musical play triggered these behaviors the most. Given the ability of creative musical play to create effective and positive social responses, the researchers suggested that this particular form of play promoted children's social and emotional development.

This case study revealed that adopting a creativity-focused approach to early childhood music education could allow young children from diverse backgrounds to "express their spontaneous and innate musicality, both individually and collectively through three forms of musical play…" (John et al., 2016). Additionally, the shared musical experiences enabled children to be aware of themselves while also relating to others in a unique way through creative musical play. The researchers suggested that further research is needed on the benefits of creative musical play on the social, emotional, and musical development of children in community music settings.

Berger and Cooper (2003) observed the musical behaviors of preschool children in a free and structured musical play environment. The researchers sought to investigate how children engage in musical play alone and with each other. The purpose of investigating children's use of free musical play was to inform researchers and music teachers' pedagogical practices. The setting for this case study was a program called "Musical Play," which was comprised of eight weekly classes for preschool children and parents on a college campus. Each class was 30 minutes long and divided into four sections: "opening free play, guided group activities, middle free play, and a closing group activity" (p. 153). During the free musical play section, children

chose "music centers" to play instruments alone and with others. Group sessions included "singing, moving, listening, and children's literature with all activities taught to both parent and child" (p. 153).

The researchers assumed participant and observer roles; while one researcher participated in a session, the other observed and wrote field notes. Participation was not to instruct, but rather to *be led* by the children's exploration. Primary participants were 18 children enrolled in the program. They were divided into two groups according to age: the first group (ages two to three) consisted of nine children and the second group (ages four to five) also consisted of nine children. Secondary participants were the parents, caregivers, and any other visiting children and adults. Data collection consisted of video recordings of each Musical Play session, 170 photographs, informal interviews with the children's caregivers throughout the program, and audio recordings of informal conversations with the children. All data was coded as a result of discussions between the researchers and resulted in themes regarding children's musical play.

Three themes emerged from an analysis of the data: *unfinished play, extinguishing play,* and *enhancing play*. *Unfinished play* referred to the behavior children exhibited when their musical play was interrupted, which indicated their desire to continue free musical play. *Extinguishing play* referred to actions of adults that resulted in the obstruction of children's musical play. *Enhancing play* described how adults can promote and encourage children's musical play through their behavior and attitude towards the children and their musical utterances. The researchers' found that children engaged in musical play in structured group sessions and on their own regardless of activities planned by adults. The researchers also noted that children's musical play was impeded through adult corrections and criticism. Berger and Cooper suggested that

adults (music educators) should provide adequate time and appropriate tools and value *all* musical behaviors to enhance musical play. Another suggestion was for educators to "occasionally abandon direct instruction, thereby removing emphasis on the musical product" (p. 162).

In an article presenting a rationale for developing undergraduate and graduate music education programs centered around play, Koops and Taggart (2011) applied early childhood researchers' concepts of learning through play to preservice music teachers. The authors offered examples of engaging in play through coursework, socialization, and research. Koops and Taggart (2011) argued that games have a place in the classroom, especially cooperative games, because of their ability to allow for the generation of many creative ideas, including some that are silly and creative, leading to new insight in a safe environment via a playful activity. The authors suggested that curriculum developers should explore creating a culture of play by incorporating playful ideas into undergraduate and graduate programs. Once play is implemented into higher education, it could "lead to research on the benefits of play-based activities, identification of best practices for playful activities, and possibly a compilation of ideas and strategies for including play in the undergraduate and graduate music education programs" (Koops & Taggart, 2011, p. 11).

Improvisation Studies in the Music Education Curriculum

In a philosophical paper, Kanellopoulos (2011) aimed to, first, examine how aspects of Russian philosopher and literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, might inform our understanding of the aesthetics of improvisation by analyzing the experiential and perceptual qualities of improvised music-making, and second, outline the implications free improvisation for music education. A Bakhtinian conception of improvisation emphasizes the cultivation of an attitude of consciousness that leads to an understanding of improvised music as a way to explore the unknown,

to search for freedom through the responsibility to attend to the uniqueness of irrevocable musical acts. Emphasis is given to the potential of musical improvisation to create a context that counters monologic musical discourses, providing resistance to closure and fixedness. Kanellopoulos argued that improvisation is dialogic because it creates a very special sense of interaction, characterized by "unfinalizability" and "openness" (p. 124). However, Kanellopoulos stated that temporary finalizations occur through the presence of an audience as the musicians struggle to raise their minds "above" their playing, looking at their music from outside and getting "back in" again (p. 114). Kanellopoulos concluded that this Bakhtinian view of improvisation would be educationally valuable because it regards improvisation as a problem-positing approach rather than a problem-solving method. This study suggests that free improvisation is a musical practice that can involve music students in the experiential pursuit of freedom and imagining ways forward by allowing the flourishing of a polyphony of unmarked voices, providing the possibility of an enactment of everyday living in musical terms. In other words, free improvisation can mirror the continuous flow of flux and community that humans experience throughout their lives.

A year earlier, Wright and Kanellopoulos (2010) explored how improvisation can be conceived of as an informal music education process and secondly, the impact a free improvisation course had on preservice teachers' perceptions in relation to themselves as musicians, on music (as a school subject), and on children as musicians. The study was conducted at two Greek universities, using a narrative methodology. Data were collected in the form of reflective diaries or learning journals which 91 preservice teachers kept throughout their participation in the free improvisation course. During the course, student teachers were involved in a myriad of improvisa-

tional activities, such as small and whole group improvisations and semi-structured improvisations on their primary instruments. Participants also read and discussed relevant literature related to free improvisation in the course.

Employing a descriptive-interpretive method, findings were separated into three categories: "Autonomy: in search of foundations," "developing the self," and "developing an open attitude towards children and music" (p. 77). Participants identified differences in instrumental technique as a strength rather than as a skill gap. Musical knowledge ceased to be something mastered and was instead seen as a method of communication among participants. Group free improvisation strengthened collective identity of the ensemble, forming a common musical space where democratic music-making was emphasized. Preservice teachers questioned their fundamental relationship with music, which encouraged them to see music-making differently, detached from a skills-based context. Lastly, mutual respect between student and teacher emerged through free improvisation. The role of student-teacher-participant is one of the foundational concepts of critical pedagogy (Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010), which maintains a goal of teaching as an emancipation from oppression through an awakening of the critical consciousness (Kincheloe, 1997, p. 24). In the context of free improvisation, if students and teachers are participating in a musical act as equals, hierarchical barriers can be broken down in favor of sheer equality and collaboration.

The researchers suggested that improvisation is important in fostering the qualities required of teachers in working with informal pedagogies within music education. Related to critical theory, Wright and Kanellopoulos (2010) also suggested that informal music-making experiences may slowly urge music educators to develop a critical perspective on both music education

theories and practices. Improvisation may offer a route for creating a powerful dialogical relationship between teachers' identities as learners, their attitudes towards students being imaginative musicians, and the interrelationships between expressive technique and culture, thus becoming "an act of transcendence" (Allsup, 1997, p. 81). In other words, improvisation can be perceived as a gateway in which student-teacher equality is valued through expressive individuality and creativity.

Song (2013) examined the extent to which improvisation is currently available in collegiate music curricula via a survey issued to faculty members across twelve institutions. Out of 61 respondents, 45 reported their institution offered courses and ensembles devoted to improvisation, but only six respondents indicated that a course in improvisation was required for music education majors. Additionally, none of the respondents indicated that their institutions offered a course in free improvisation. Results indicate that preservice music teachers could be better prepared to teach improvisation if it were embedded into the curriculum.

In response to the dearth of creative activities in music educators' classrooms, Hickey and Schmidt (2019) studied the effects that a composition and improvisation professional development workshop had on teachers' perceptions and frequency of teaching improvisation and composition in their classes. The study used a quasi-experimental pretest/posttest/follow-up posttest design. The pretest and posttest were administered directly before and after the workshop, respectively, and the three follow-up surveys were issued 6 weeks, 6 months, and 9 months after the workshop. The participants ($N = 36$) were music teachers from the Chicago metro area with a range of 1 to 30+ years of experience in K-12 and college classrooms. The survey contained four parts: demographic information, history of using music composition and improvisation in educa-

tional settings, frequency of composing and improvisation as a musician and teacher, and perceptions of including composition and improvisation in the music classroom. Results showed a significant decline ($p < .05$) in the frequency of using improvisation between the first post workshop survey and all of the following posttests. The test results are as follows: first posttest ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.58$) measured educators' intention to incorporate improvisation, and the 6-week ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.09$), 6-month ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.71$) and 9-month posttests ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.97$) measured the application. These results suggest that the future of improvisation in the music classroom should rely on its employment in preservice teacher education rather than one-shot professional development workshops. However, Madura Ward-Steinman's (2007) use of a six-week intensive workshop in vocal jazz improvisation did showcase an increase in confidence ratings between the pre- and post-tests across all achievement standards. Madura Ward-Steinman's (2007) study supports the value of longer periods of training and education such as integration of improvisation practice into preservice teacher curriculum rather than a short-duration workshop.

Applications of Free Improvisation in K-12 Curriculum

Hickey (2009) argued that improvisation is a skill that cannot be taught through transmission but instead a way of music-making that can be enabled and developed. She suggested that current approaches in music education often do not focus on facilitating creative thinking and growth and may actually hamper the development of creative musicians rather than evoke creative thought. Hickey (2009) also suggests that teaching exists on a continuum from a "direct transmission" approach to a broader view of teaching as "enculturation" through exploration, apprenticeships, and exposure to cultural exemplars. Due to improvisation being an extemporaneous and in-the-moment way of music-making, Hickey (2009) argued that it cannot be overtly taught, but rather can be developed through enculturation. Hickey (2009) superimposed the

transmission-enculturation teaching continuum over Jeff Pressing's five-stage historical account of improvisation. Pressing's (1987) five stages of improvisation are as follows: stage 1, "embellishment," stage 2, "patterns and models," stage 3, "problem-solving," stage 4, "play-by-ear," and stage 5, "free improvisation" (p. 287). Each stage of Pressing's (1987) improvisation model represents an increasing level of freedom from stages one to five, with stage 1 being the most restrictive and stage 5 being the freest stage. Hickey (2009) asserted that the lower stages of improvisation are more susceptible to teacher-directed learning or transmission, and the higher stages of improvisation are most effectively learned through enculturation, which is more learner-directed. In this way the final stage, free improvisation, is purely based on concepts of personal expression and creativity, which the student(s) can only find on their own without a teacher's biases and preconceptions. Hickey (2009) proposed that music educators should adopt a balance between structure and a "throw them in the deep end" approach to teach improvisation and true creative thinking, which was a point that was also emphasized in Madura Ward-Steinman's (2014) study.

Following the discussion on Pressing's (1987) stages of improvisation, Hickey (2009) surveyed the history of improvisation in public school music programs. Improvisation was assimilated into school music programs once the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) published *The School Music Program; Description and Standards* (MENC, National Commission on Instruction, 1994), which included organizing (composition and improvisation) alongside performing and describing. Hickey contested that improvisation was approached as a skill devoid of its cultural context within school music programs. As music such as free jazz evolved outside of schools, music programs maintained more structured approaches to learning improvisation through general music methodologies such as there seemed to be no relationship between jazz,

non-jazz, and free improvisation within the schools. Hickey (2009) argued that the sample activities for improvisation in these standards were no more authentic or free than the publications in the 1960s and 1970s (much less so, in fact; the avant-garde improvisation was authentic for what it was). The author concluded that most current methods have three common qualities: first, there is a carefully designed curriculum for reaching an improvisational product, which ensures tonal or rhythmic success; second, students' choices are restricted; and third, the path to the improvisational product is teacher-directed. Hickey (2009) asserted that these qualities do not teach improvisation and are more likely to dampen any drive to improvise freely and creatively. Thus, improvisation that occurs in schools and improvisation that takes place by musicians outside of school settings are dichotomized, which, in turn, excludes free improvisation or free jazz practices from school music programs.

Hickey (2009) concluded there must be a balance of a teacher-directed, skills-based approach to teaching music and complete freedom to explore and respond to a sonic environment through free improvisation. Since free improvisation is a form of music that is the most open and most learner-directed, it *cannot* be taught, but experienced. The author isolated issues that have hindered free jazz from integrating into school music programs, most notably the issues of classroom management, performance value, and especially teacher preparation. In order for music teachers to be comfortable and confident with teaching in the two polar domains of teacher-directed and student-directed learning, they must be prepared for it.

In a later multiple case study, Hickey (2015) surveyed four esteemed free improvisation instructors at the collegiate level to inform K-12 music education. The free improvisation pedagogues—Pauline Oliveros, Fred Frith, Ed Sarath, and David Ballou—were interviewed and observed in order to find commonalities in their teaching strategies with the goal of applying these

concepts to K-12 music education. The concepts of interest to Hickey were the pedagogical techniques, kinds of spaces, and interactions that were created as a result of free improvisation practices. The expert pedagogues were observed as they directed free improvisation ensembles in their university settings. All four of the universities where the subjects taught offer free improvisation ensembles as a major ensemble that students can participate in for credit.

Hickey (2015) analyzed data gathered from semi-structured interviews, rehearsal observations, and document analysis, such as syllabi, press materials about the pedagogues and their ensembles, and course texts. Eight of the following themes emerged from the researcher's observations: (1) teacher tools, (2) vocabulary, (3) physical teaching space, (4) feedback, (5) leader as guide, (6) comfort with spontaneity, (7) psychological space, and (8) pedagogue as performer. The author divided these themes into four separate groups as they related to her research questions: "strategies and approaches," "the perceived role of the ensemble leader," "pedagogue dispositions," and "other attributes of pedagogues".

Teacher tools, the first of the strategies and approaches, consisted of short creative exercises or prompts that inspired the ensemble to respond musically. These prompts would typically come from the teacher at the beginning of the rehearsals, but as the rehearsals continued, students would often be asked to guide the music with their own creative ideas. Vocabulary was unique amongst the participants because free improvisation does not usually account for tonality or clear melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic gestures that many musicians are familiar with. As a result, the pedagogues used metaphors and descriptive language unique to themselves. The physical teaching space contained a circular setup in each of the ensembles the researcher observed, and the pedagogue was either a part of the circle or observed from afar. The ensembles often operated best in a smaller, chamber-sized format, with 12 being the average number of musicians in

the ensembles the researcher observed. Instrumentation was extremely varied in each of the ensembles, featuring voice to traditional band and orchestra instruments, and electronics. In giving feedback, each of the pedagogues avoided any kind of qualitative feedback in rehearsal. Instead, they used objective language and probed their ensembles with questions to guide reflection.

Although each pedagogue understood their institutional role as an authority figure, they perceived their roles as ensemble guides and facilitators rather than as directors. The pedagogues never conducted the ensembles nor started and stopped the music during the researcher's observations. The music began and ended in an improvisatory consensus between all musicians in the ensembles.

Two dispositions emerged from Hickey's (2015) data: comfort with spontaneity and sensitivity to the psychological space of the ensemble. The pedagogues abandoned planning in an effort to spontaneously react to what the ensembles seemed like they needed. All of the pedagogues were comfortable being flexible, improvising as teachers *and* musicians. Comfort and community were the epicenter of the ensembles' psychological space. Being a way of music-making that elicits total authenticity, imagination, and transparency at its best, free improvisation ensembles were described as a safe place to experiment and discover by the pedagogues.

Lastly, the four participants were also active performers and improvisers in addition to holding their roles as directors. All of the pedagogues cited technique as an important facet in being free improvisers and modeling tool as educators. Hickey (2015) suggested the pedagogues' dual identities as performers and members of the ensembles they directed seemed to support the egalitarian nature of the ensembles.

Hickey (2015) concluded that these themes have implications for K-12 music education, and that the greatest implication from this study relates to preservice music teacher education.

The researcher argued that providing spaces and experiences for preservice music teachers to experiment with this mode of music-making is key in ensuring its integration and success in K-12 classrooms. If successfully integrated into preservice teacher programs, free improvisation can offer tools for music educators to facilitate a more informal, democratic, and non-qualitative approach for ensembles of all stripes.

Summary

Despite evidence that suggests that opportunities to play and improvise can lead to a more creative and democratic curriculum in K-12 music education (John et al., 2011; Berger and Cooper, 2003; Hickey, 2009; Hickey, 2015; Kanellopoulos, 2011), there is evidence that suggests activities of musical play and improvisation are not available in music education.

Madura Ward-Steinman's (2014) study found two main characteristics of a learning environment in which improvisation is being taught: "feeling safe in the learning environment" and "balancing control and freedom," which suggests that improvisation is a skill that can be developed and that it may be developed most effectively when there is a safe environment to improvise in one's musical development, and when strict forms are balanced with free improvisation. Hickey (2009) also stressed that music educators should adopt a balance between structure and a "throw them in the deep end" approach to teaching improvisation and creative thinking. This balance of a teacher-directed structure and complete freedom to explore and respond to a sonic environment appears be the most effective experience to creative improvisation (Hickey, 2009).

Other important topics relevant to improvisation pedagogy include: (1) teacher tools, (2) vocabulary, (3) physical teaching space, (4) feedback, (5) leader as guide, (6) comfort with spontaneity, (7) psychological space, and (8) pedagogue as performer (Hickey, 2015). These themes have powerful implications for K-12 music education and for the current study.

In conclusion, studies have shown that the most effective way of learning free improvisation is through enculturation in an exploratory musical experience in a safe learning environment that is balanced with a structured, teacher-directed approach (Hickey, 2009, 2015; Madura Ward-Steinman, 2014). Since most music education takes place through that structure, experience with improvisation may serve as a counterbalance.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this practicum was to create eight lesson plans that use games to teach musical improvisation. The goal of these lessons was to introduce students to spontaneous creativity through musical play in which the process of playful improvisation was valued over the assessment of a created product. These lesson plans were designed for students of ages 10 to 14. Students in this age demographic can participate in musical ensembles more ably (McPherson, 2006), be challenged to synchronize to faster and accelerating tempos, and to off-beats (Reifinger, 2006), and the environmental and social aspects of music itself strongly influence students' musical participation and responses (Gembris, 2006; Hargreaves et al., 2003; McPherson, 2006).

Development of the Lesson Plans

In order to develop the lesson plans, I first examined studies that investigated the benefits of musical play in music education (Berger & Cooper, 2003; Koops & Taggart, 2011; John et al., 2016). I adapted the teaching strategies and materials in these studies to my lesson plans. These lesson plans were divided into two units, comprised of four lessons each. In the first unit, students begin to learn about, discuss, and demonstrate musical improvisation and the differences between active and passive listening, which provides the foundation for a curriculum built on collaborative musical games. They also explored unpitched percussion and keyboard instruments with the opportunity of using the teacher as a resource, which reflects an activity of unguided musical play (John et al., 2016). In the second unit, students participate in guided play through musical games. Students fortify their understanding of improvised music, active listening, and collaboration through games chosen from Agrell's (2008) *Improvisation Games for Classical Musicians* based on the criteria of exercising collaboration and spontaneous creativity. These

games contained simple prompts with which students generated an imaginative musical response with their peers. Through teaching music with games, students could better understand what it means to play music without formal assessment while also increasing their listening skills and capacity to imagine original music.

This was a practicum which presented lesson plans aimed to teach spontaneous musical improvisation through a teacher's facilitation of engaging students with creative and collaborative musical games. Many of these games were originally created to situate students to spontaneously improvise music alone and collaboratively with others. Games were also selections of Agrell's (2008) *Improvisation Games for Classical Musicians* with the criteria that the directions or prompts for the games elicit an imaginative scenario in which the students could collaborate through improvised sounds and music-making.

Agrell, a jazz guitarist and professor of horn at the University of Iowa, wrote a book containing a collection of musical games to encourage musicians to improvise. Agrell (2008) identifies the purpose for writing this collection of musical games as "…to supply something that has been missing from the students' music education from the beginning: a chance to experiment, explore, and use their imaginations to create their own music, and to understand music…" (p. xvi). Agrell (2008) states the aim of this collection of games is to "…provide experience in the aural approach to learning music as a complement to the 'literate' approach that comprises the majority of traditional musical training" (p. 3).

Procedure

This practicum was developed as a curriculum for a community music education program. A community program was chosen as the basis for this practicum because of the opportunities available to balance the more structured musical experiences that K-12 students are offered

in public schools such as large performing ensembles (e.g., band, orchestra, and choir). The games presented in this outline are not only applicable to a community music program but could also inform music educators' pedagogical practices in K-12 and collegiate settings, in particular how they can implement the 2014 Music Standards for *Creating* and *Connecting* (National Association for Music Education). The eight lesson plans that were developed as a result of reimagining play in music education are presented in this chapter. These lessons were sequentially designed and scaffolded with the following musical criteria: call and response, listening, rhythm, pitch, and chamber ensembles (consisting of two to three students in each ensemble). Call and response activities can give students opportunities to create music through listening rather than reading music notation. Consequently, call and response, as well as listening, serve as a foundation for students to improvise music collaboratively with others. Rhythm was isolated at first because the addition of musical pitches can overwhelm students who may have little to no experience with improvisation. The exclusion of pitched percussion and/or keyboard instruments in some lessons was the method used to isolate rhythm. The first six lessons situate students in an ensemble composed of the entire class to provide students with a sense of familiarity and safety rather than playing in more transparent chamber or solo settings. The final two lessons give students the opportunity to improvise music in a chamber setting which provide the students with more agency and responsibility in the directions of their improvisational performances.

Development of the Lesson Plans

Previous Literature

Evidence suggests that opportunities to engage in playful and improvisatory music-making can lead to a more creative and democratic curriculum in K-12 music education (John et al., 2011; Berger and Cooper, 2003; Hickey, 2009; Hickey, 2015; Kanellopoulos, 2011). Since these

opportunities are scarce in K-12 music education, musical games can be used as a way to balance more traditional and competitive performance-based musical experiences. These games, if used collaboratively, can also be effective in teaching cooperation rather than competition (Blatner & Blatner, 1988; Elkind, 2007). In the previous literature, research combined two distinct forms of musical play: guided and unguided. The common methods used in unguided musical play are play centers with musical instruments, while guided musical play include games, improvisation, and the use of informal assessment methods (John et al., 2016). These teaching methods were shown to be helpful for music learning, and so the current practicum borrowed and adapted some of these methods found in previous literature.

Materials

In the previous literature, games were found to be effective in teaching cooperation if used in collaboration rather than competition (Blatner & Blatner, 1988; Elkind, 2007). Collaborative musical games could be used as a way to build an intrinsic value of music rather than music being valued on the basis of competition. Improvisation games, such as those from *Improvisation Games for Classical Musicians* (Agrell, 2008), are a valuable way create opportunities for collaborative musical play while simultaneously cultivating an open and fearless mindset when it comes to improvising music. As a result, many of the lessons in the current practicum use Agrell's (2008) games as a foundation to engage students in improvisatory collaborative musical play. Since this resource contains over 500 games, specific criteria was necessary in selecting each game; games were chosen based on their flexibility in the amount of participants (two to seven), opportunities for students to exercise spontaneous creativity, and their capacity to enable students to collaborate in a musical setting.

Lesson Plans

The eight lesson plans were divided into two units (see Figure 1). All the themes were identified based on either the primary activities that occupy the lessons ("Playing Centers" and "Improvisatory Games") or the fundamental knowledge students will learn ("Introduction to Improvised Music and Active Listening"). Upon finishing the two units, students should be able to play music through improvisation on one or more musical instruments. Perhaps more importantly, they will also be able to perceive music as an activity of play rather than a mandatory activity they will be assessed on.

The goal for each lesson was to facilitate an environment in which students could play musical games with their peers akin to a musical playground. The themes contained activities of unguided and guided play as well as foundational ideas of listening to and playing music alone and with others. Each lesson was scaffolded to, first, provide students with an opportunity to explore unpitched percussion and keyboard instruments and to immerse the students in collaborative musical games.

Figure 1
The Two Units of the Eight Playful Improvisation Lesson Plans

Unit	Theme	Goals for Music Teaching
Unit 1 **Lessons 1-4**	- Introduction to Improvised Music and Active Listening - Unguided Play through Playing Centers	- Students will freely explore unpitched percussion and keyboard instruments through playing centers, akin to a musical playground. - Students will understand how to actively listen and why it is important.

Figure 1
The Two Units of the Eight Playful Improvisation Lesson Plans

Unit	Theme	Goals for Music Teaching
Unit 2 **Lessons 5-8**	- Guided Play through Improvisatory Games	- Students will demonstrate a positive, open, and playful attitude towards engaging in original improvisations through the use of musical games.

Chapter 4: Lesson Materials

Lesson Plan 1

Length of Class: 30 minutes

Class Setting: Initial exploratory musical environment for students from 10 to 14 years of age. Students have limited experiences in music and playing musical instruments.

Materials: Drum sticks, household items (pots, pans, kitchen utensils, etc.) and/or unpitched percussion instruments (drums, tambourine, shakers, etc.), pencils, and paper

Objectives

a. Students will engage in their first musical game.

b. Students will describe spontaneous musical improvisation as an entertaining, challenging, and expressive way to play with musical sounds.

c. Students will explore unpitched percussion instruments through unguided play centers.

Procedures

1. The teacher will prepare the environment before class by placing instruments around the perimeter of the room in which the class will be held. Instruments should be equally spaced, forming play centers around the room.

2. The teacher will form a circle on the floor with the rest of the students upon their arrival. The teacher will greet the students and play a musical introduction game with them.

3. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will explain the rule of the introduction game. The rule is everyone must answer the following questions with every word pitched higher or lower than the word before it: *What's your name? What grade are you in? What's your favorite color? What do you like to do in your free time?* The teacher will begin the game, proceeded by the students in a clockwise direction. The teacher should strive to provide students with feedback through subjective,

descriptive responses relating to how the students sounded rather than objective feedback (*That sounds wavy/jagged/purple to me!)*.

4. **[7 minutes]** The teacher will introduce the concept of improvised music through an informal discussion with the students. The following questions will be explored: *Why play music? How can we play music without being able to read music?* The teacher should seek to lead the students to describe playing improvised music as a fun, challenging, and expressive way to engage with music.

5. **[3 minutes]** The teacher will explain the following: 1) how to take care of instruments responsibly; and 2) the importance of sharing with another student when a play center is in high demand.

6. **[10 minutes]** The teacher will introduce an unguided play activity in which students will choose a play center to freely explore unpitched percussion instruments. Students are free to play with the instruments until approximately five minutes before the end of class. The teacher will serve as a resource and facilitator to students' learning. This should be achieved by walking the perimeter of the room to ensure consistent close proximity to each student, and asking students questions about the instruments and encourage different ways to play them (e.g., *What if you played the instrument this way, how would it sound?*).

7. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will direct students to draw a picture and/or write a sentence that describes how they felt about playing with the instruments. Students will hand their papers to the teacher upon exiting the class.

Assessment

a. The teacher will informally observe students playing with instruments at various playing centers. The students should be seen continuously exploring the instruments to understand the basics of how they work, sound, and how they can be used as creative tools for music-making. The teacher should strive to assist students in their learning through intermittent questioning to ensure students have a basic understanding of how instruments can be manipulated or played differently to achieve different sounds.
b. The teacher will observe students articulate the different purposes of improvising music.
c. The teacher will evaluate the pictures or words that the students used to depict their feelings about the unguided play activity. In activities of musical play, the teacher should look for responses that relate to positive emotions (e.g., joy, happiness, excitement, fun, etc.). This can be communicated through words that correspond to these emotions or through pictures such as happy faces.

Lesson Plan 2

Length of Class: 30 minutes

Class Setting: In the previous lesson, students discussed the purpose and importance of playing improvised music, and explored unpitched percussion instruments.

Materials: Orff mallets and keyboard instruments (digital keyboards, Orff instruments, and/or acoustic pianos), pencils, and paper

Objectives

a. Students will describe the purpose and importance of playing improvised music.
b. Students will explore keyboard instruments through unguided play centers.
c. Students will describe how external stimuli (colors) can be interpreted through improvised music.

Procedures

1. The teacher will prepare the environment before class by placing instruments around the perimeter of the room in which the class will be held. Instruments should be equally spaced, forming play centers around the room.
2. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will form a circle on the floor with the students. The teacher will then review the discussion from the first lesson about playing improvised music. (*Why play music? How can we play music without being able to read music?*) The teacher will aim to remind the students that playing with improvised music is a fun way to express themselves.
3. **[3 minutes]** The teacher will ask the students to choose a color. The teacher will then ask how could that color sound if it were in music (i.e. *How could purple be interpreted musically? What about yellow?)*.
4. **[3 minutes]** The teacher will then lead a solo free improvisation based on that color.
5. [**3 minutes]** The teacher will ask the students how the color related to what (s)he played.
6. **[~2 minutes]** The teacher will review the following rules: 1) how to take care of instruments responsibly; and 2) the importance of sharing with another student when a play center is in high demand.
7. **[10 minutes]** The teacher will introduce an unguided play activity in which students will choose a play center to freely explore keyboard instruments. Students are free to play with the instruments until approximately five minutes before the end of class. The teacher will serve as a resource and facilitator to students' learning. This should be achieved by walking the perimeter of the room to ensure consistent close proximity to each student, and asking students questions about the instruments and encourage different ways to play them (e.g., "What if you played the instrument *this* way, how would it sound?").

8. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will direct students to write a paragraph describing a moment during class they felt was interesting and why.

Assessment

a. The teacher will informally observe students playing with instruments at various playing centers. The students should be seen continuously exploring the instruments to understand the basics of how they work, sound, and how they can be used as creative tools for music-making. The teacher should strive to assist students in their learning through intermittent questioning to ensure students have a basic understanding of how instruments can be manipulated or played differently to achieve different sounds.
b. The teacher will observe students describe how colors can be interpreted through improvised music.
c. The teacher will evaluate the sentences students wrote to better understand what interests each student.

Lesson Plan 3

Length of Class: 30 minutes

Class Setting: Students have explored unpitched percussion and keyboard instruments on their own through unguided play activities.

Materials: Metronome (or smartphone with metronome app), paper and pencil

Objectives

a. Students will use body percussion to create simple rhythms.
b. Students will demonstrate the concept of call and response.
c. Students will describe the function of a metronome.
d. Students will demonstrate how to play with a metronome.

Procedures

1. **[3-4 minutes]** The teacher will explain what call and response is in music. This concept can be demonstrated by playing a game of *Copycat* in which one person mimics someone else's words in a conversation. The teacher will ask for a volunteer to help demonstrate this idea using a game and proceed to mimic every word the student says.
2. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will then ask the students to copy everything (s)he says together (in unison). The two rules of the game are: everyone must mimic what they hear the teacher say *exactly* (loud/soft, sad/angry, slow/fast, etc.) and it must be mimicked with everyone else at the same time. The teacher is encouraged to use this game as an opportunity to review previous concepts about improvisation, active/passive listening, and musical games (e.g. "Musical games are fun to play with others," "Improvising music lets me create music of my own," etc.). The teacher must be diligent in manipulating their voice to coax students into replicating certain characteristics and be quick to let students know when they are not mimicking in character or in unison.
3. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will then ask for a student to volunteer to lead the *Copycat* game with the same rules. Other volunteers can be chosen as time allows.
4. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will review the concept of a musical beat and musical rhythm, which students learned in their General Music or Instrumental curriculum (National Association for Music Education, 2014), through an informal discussion. The teacher should guide the students to clap a steady beat while the teacher improvises clapped rhythms over them. Through this activity, the distinction should be made that a beat is almost always constant through a piece of music and rhythms are grounded in and improvised around the beat.

5. **[2-3 minutes]** The teacher will discuss the purpose of a metronome (to keep a steady beat like a drummer in a band). The teacher will demonstrate what the metronome sounds like and its basic features (tempo and meter). The metronome can be passed around so students can interact with it.
6. **[2-3 minutes]** The teacher will explain the rules of the next game: *Copyclap.* The rules are the same as *Copycat*, but students have an additional rule of mimicking the clapped rhythm in time with the metronome (4/4, BPM=100). The teacher should remind students that they should clap together and replicate the musical characteristics set by the teacher.
7. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will ask for a volunteer to lead a few rounds of *Copyclap.* The teacher should assume the role of a participant in these rounds. More volunteers can be chosen as time allows.

Assessment

a. The teacher will informally observe students and listen for accuracy of rhythms in how they relate to the metronome. Keeping a beat is foundational for improvisation exercises that use a constant tempo or beat.
b. The teacher will listen for an accurate replication (dynamics, rhythm, timbre, etc.) of the sound to be copied. The teacher is encouraged to use questions to guide students to a more accurate replication of the original sound (e.g., *What's different about the sounds you made? Is it softer/louder? Is everyone clapping together?*).
c. The teacher will listen for students to describe the purpose and function of a metronome with sentences such as "to keep a steady beat," or "be a drummer," etc.

Lesson Plan 4

Length of Class: 30 minutes

Class Setting: Students have engaged in their first improvisatory musical games with call and response and body percussion. Students also learned what a metronome is and what it does.

Materials: Music streaming service (Spotify, YouTube, Apple Music) or physical media (CDs, USB drive with audio files), playlist/media storage with five age-appropriate music tracks from a variety of genres (R&B, pop, jazz, classical, electronic, etc.), smartphone or computer, speakers and compatible cables, and a sign that reads "Active Listening" on one side and "Passive Listening" on the other.

Objectives

a. Students will be able to discuss the difference between passive and active listening.

b. Students will demonstrate active and passive listening.

c. Students will be able to verbalize the value in active listening while playing music.

Procedures

1. **[~4 minutes]** The teacher will start the lesson by asking the students how they listen to music: *What do you think about while you listen to music? What does your body do while you listen to music? How does music make you feel (happy, sad, angry)?* The teacher will then play an excerpt of a musical recording and direct the students to think about the previously mentioned questions while they listen.
2. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will engage the students in a discussion about how they listened to the music.
3. **[2-3 minutes]** The teacher will then present two ways people can listen to music: active listening and passive listening. They will ask the students what they think the two types of listening mean. The teacher will conclude the discussion by defining the two ideas. **Passive listening** is when someone hears music in the background while they do something else (play a game, talk

to a friend, shop at the grocery store, ride in the car, etc.). **Active listening** is when someone listens to music and only pays attention to the music; when their mind starts to wander, they direct their attention back to the music.

4. **[2-3 minutes]** The teacher will teach the following game: The teacher will cycle through music tracks and hold up a sign that either says "Active Listening" or "Passive Listening." Students can demonstrate active listening by being silent and showing signs of attentively listening to the music (dancing, eyes closed, sitting still, etc.). Students could play a portable video game or talk with each other while music is playing to demonstrate passive listening. Note: the teacher should use their best judgment and knowledge of each student to best determine if students are demonstrating the type of listening indicated by the teacher.
5. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will ask students to volunteer to take on the role of controlling the Active/Passive Listening sign. The teacher can manage the music recordings and participate in the game as the volunteer manages the sign. More volunteers can be selected as time allows. A complete musical recording can be played through for each volunteer, totaling five volunteers and recordings.
6. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will engage students in a group discussion about how music sounds different based on the kind of attention devoted as a listener. The teacher will continue the discussion by comparing listening in a verbal conversation to listening to another musician while playing music with them. The discussion will be concluded by asking students what active and passive listening are and why they are important to know about.
7. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will ask students to write a paragraph describing the difference of their listening experience when actively and passively listening.

Assessment

a. The teacher will informally observe students indicate active and passive listening in the listening game.

b. The teacher will search for indications of students' knowledge about passive and active listening through discussions. Students should relate both ways of listening to attention and/or focus; active listening requires a narrower form of consistent focus on the music while passive listening typically occurs while multitasking.

Lesson Plan 5

Length of Class: 30 minutes

Class Setting: Students previously learned about the concepts and importance active and passive listening and how they apply to music.

Materials: Drum sticks, household items (pots, pans, kitchen utensils, etc.) and/or unpitched percussion instruments (drums, tambourine, shakers, etc.), pencils, paper, whiteboard/chalkboard, and chalk/markers

Objectives

a. Students will play a musical game on unpitched percussion instruments with no formal structure or beat.

b. Students will play a musical game on unpitched percussion instruments with a metronome or drum machine.

c. Students will engage in active listening with other students 'improvisations.

Procedures

1. The teacher will prepare the play centers around the proximity of the room before the students arrive (similar to Lesson 1).

2. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will direct the students to freely explore the unpitched percussion instruments through unguided play for the first five minutes of the session. The teacher will serve as a resource and facilitator to students' learning. This should be achieved by walking the perimeter of the room to ensure consistent close proximity to each student, and asking students questions about the instruments and encourage different ways to play them.
3. **[2 minutes]** The teacher will capture the students' attention and request them to bring the instruments to a specified place in the room, forming a circle with the teacher. The teacher will assist students as needed based on their physical abilities and instruments.
4. **[8 minutes]** After a circle is formed of students and their chosen instruments, the teacher will describe the rules to the next musical game, *Feelings* (Agrell, 2008). The rules are: Students brainstorm a list of emotions and moods, both "positive" (happy, proud, excited, etc.) and "negative" (scared, mad, lonely, etc.). (The teacher should write down everything the group comes up with on a surface that will be visible to the students throughout the game). Player One *silently* selects a term from the list and plays music that reflects the chosen word. Player Two (to the left of Player One) will listen and play music that matches the mood of Player One's music. The teacher will participate with the students and hold their fist in the air to indicate when the music should start to come to an end. Player Two then selects an emotion and plays music embodying the chosen term for Player Three (to the left of Player Two), whom will listen and join in with matching music. Repeat this process until all students have played. The teacher will then ask the students how the musical choices they made related to the selected emotion.
5. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will review active listening with the students through an informal discussion. After this review, the teacher will remind the students who are waiting for their turn

to focus on listening to the music their peers are making. The teacher, who will begin to lead the group through the *Feelings* game, will also play the remainder of the game with the students.

6. **[2 minutes]** In preparation for the next rhythm game, the teacher will review the purpose and use of a metronome through a brief discussion with the students.
7. **[8 minutes]** The teacher will outline the rules for the next musical game, *Ostinato*: starting from Player One and adding the player to the left every 16 beats (four measures of 4/4), students can only play their instruments *on* the beat with the metronome (only quarter notes). Students are free to accent any notes or change the dynamics at any point through the game. The teacher will also participate in this game. By the end of the game, everyone will be playing a morphing quarter-note ostinato. The teacher should encourage students to make a variety of musical choices through statements or questions after each round of the game (e.g. *Try to start softer and slowly get louder as we play. What could we change in the music to make it even more interesting?*). **Note**: if students happen to have more developed rhythmic skills, eighth- and sixteenth-notes can be used as well but cannot be changed once chosen in order to preserve the groove.

Assessment

a. The teacher will observe students play an improvisation free of any determined beat or tempo. Students should make musical decisions that corresponds to the emotions in the *Feelings* game. These musical decisions may be evident to the teacher and require no explanation, but students should be able to verbalize the relevance of their musical decisions so they can connect imagined emotions to abstract musical decisions.
b. The teacher will observe students play an improvisation in time with the metronome.

c. The teacher will observe students spontaneously manipulate their musical decisions to provide variety in the music. Musical choices can be manipulated through dynamics or phrasing.

d. The teacher will observe students showcase signs of active listening while other students engage in improvisational play. Students should not be holding conversations with others or making sounds out of turn while the games are being played.

Lesson Plan 6

Length of Class: 30 minutes

Class Setting: Students have played their first musical game using unpitched percussion instruments.

Materials: Orff mallets and keyboard instruments (digital keyboards, Orff instruments, and/or acoustic pianos), pencils, and paper

Objectives

a. Play improvised music on keyboard instruments with no formal structure or beat.

b. Play improvised music on keyboard instruments with a drum machine.

c. Engage in active listening with other students 'improvisations.

Procedures

1. The teacher will prepare the play centers around the proximity of the room before the students arrive (similar to Lesson 2).
2. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will direct the students to freely explore the keyboard instruments of their choice through unguided play for the first five minutes of the session. The teacher will serve as a resource and facilitator to students' learning. This should be achieved by walking the perimeter of the room to ensure consistent close proximity to each student, and asking students questions about the instruments and encourage different ways to play them.

3. **[2 minutes]** The teacher will capture the students' attention and request them to bring the instruments to a specified place in the room, forming a circle with the teacher. The teacher will assist students as needed based on their physical abilities and instruments.
4. **[2-3 minutes]** After a circle is formed of students and their chosen instruments, the teacher will describe the rules to the next musical game, *Squiggle Quartet* (Agrell, 2008): players make squiggles of any sort on pieces of paper with pencils. Then they exchange pieces of paper and play the "piece" without discussion.
5. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will allow students to create their squiggle "score." The teacher will discuss with the students regarding their decisions and use questions to guide students through their thought process and encourage new directions (e.g., *Why did you choose that kind of line/shape? How do you imagine your piece will sound? How else could a musician interpret this? What if you drew a zig-zag instead of a spiral; how would that sound?*).
6. **[5 minutes]** After students exchange their papers, students will improvise music based off of the original squiggle scores. The teacher should interact with each students during this time to ask them questions regarding their musical responses to the squiggles and encourage them to think of other ways they could interpret the picture. Depending on time available, additional exchanges can be made for more rounds of the game.
7. **[2 minutes]** The teacher will re-introduce the metronome for the next musical game. A discussion-based review can be done if necessary.
8. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will describe the rules for the next musical game, *Team Groove* (Agrell, 2008): Play in all the "cracks" of the metronome beat, never landing on the beat. Instruments should be silent whenever the metronome clicks. Students can rotate or swap instruments to play more rounds of the game. The teacher should assume the role of a participant

alongside the students. The teacher should encourage students to make different musical decisions between each round of the game (e.g., *What if you change dynamics throughout? What would it sound like if we all tried to play as softly as we could? How about we limit ourselves to only one note per beat?)*.

Assessment

a. The teacher will observe students play an improvisation free of any determined beat or tempo in response to visual stimuli. Students will also be able to demonstrate how visual art could be musically reinterpreted.
b. The teacher will observe students describe how their drawing relates to sounds and musical decisions.
c. The teacher will observe students play an improvisation in time with the metronome.
d. The teacher will observe students showcase signs of active listening while other students engage in improvisational play. Students should not be holding conversations with others or making sounds out of turn while the games are being played.

Lesson Plan 7

Length of Class: 30 minutes

Class Setting: In the previous class, students played keyboard instruments in two musical games, one without musical time and one with an established beat.

Materials: Drum sticks, household items (pots, pans, kitchen utensils, etc.) and/or unpitched percussion instruments (drums, tambourine, shakers, etc.), Orff mallets, keyboard instruments (digital keyboards, Orff instruments, and/or acoustic pianos), printouts of a variety of artwork, pencils, and paper

Objectives

a. Students will play improvised music in a trio setting on keyboard and unpitched percussion instruments with no formal structure or beat.

b. Students will play improvised music in a trio setting on keyboard and unpitched percussion instruments with a drum machine or metronome.

Procedures

1. The teacher will prepare the play centers around the proximity of the room before the students arrive (similar to Lessons 1 and 2).
2. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will direct the students to freely explore the percussion or keyboard instruments of their choice through unguided play for the first five minutes of the session. The teacher will serve as a resource and facilitator to students' learning. This should be achieved by walking the perimeter of the room to ensure consistent close proximity to each student, and asking students questions about the instruments and encourage different ways to play them.
3. **[1 minute]** The teacher will capture students' attention and put them in groups of three. Students may also choose their own groups.
4. **[7 minutes]** The teacher will describe the rules to the next musical game, *Playing the Gallery* (Agrell, 2008): students will select a piece of art (provided by the teacher) and create an improvised piece of music to match their selected artwork. Groups may roughly plan their improvisation within a few minutes before playing the game for the rest of the class. While students play this game, the teacher will hold the students' selected artwork up to show the rest of the class. Artworks can be exchanged between the students to create more rounds of the game. The teacher will interact with each group of students and ask them how their improvisation related to the artwork and how it could be musically reinterpreted in other ways.

5. **[7 minutes]** The teacher may redistribute students into different groups of three. The teacher will describe the rules to the next musical game, *Going Somewhere* (Agrell, 2008): students will start a piece with a very slow tempo (no meter or 1/4, BPM=40; set by the teacher). The tempo will gradually increase in speed until it reaches the fastest tempo possible. Groups will take turns playing the game for the rest of the class. The teacher will play the game with each group. A variation of this game can be played by doing the reverse, starting at the fastest speed and gradually decreasing the tempo until the tempo is at a "snail's pace."
6. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will describe the rules to the next musical game, *Colors*: Player One will choose a color and describe how it can be interpreted through improvised music. The group will then improvise music based on that color and its description. Repeat rounds of the game until all students have chosen a color and described the color in music.
7. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will direct students to draw a picture and/or write a sentence that describes how they felt about playing with the games and which game(s) they preferred and why. Students will hand their papers to the teacher upon exiting the class. The teacher should compare these submissions with the ones submitted in the first lesson.

Assessment

a. Observe students interpret visual stimuli into a free improvisation.
b. Observe students describe how their improvisation related to the artwork and also how the art could be musically reinterpreted.
c. Observe students play a chamber improvisation with a metronome increasing or decreasing tempo.

d. The teacher will observe students showcase signs of active listening while other students engage in improvisational play. Students should not be holding conversations with others or making sounds out of turn while the games are being played.

Lesson Plan 8

Length of Class: 30 minutes

Class Setting: In the previous class, students played keyboard instruments in two musical games, one without musical time and one with an established beat.

Materials: Drum sticks, household items (pots, pans, kitchen utensils, etc.) and/or unpitched percussion instruments (drums, tambourine, shakers, etc.), Orff mallets, keyboard instruments (digital keyboards, Orff instruments, and/or acoustic pianos), pencils, and paper

Objectives

a. Students will demonstrate the ability to actively listen while playing improvised music in a small group setting.

b. Students will play improvised music in a duet setting on unpitched percussion and keyboard instruments with no formal structure or beat.

c. Students will play improvised music in a duet setting on unpitched percussion and keyboard instruments with a metronome or drum machine.

Procedures

1. The teacher will prepare the play centers around the proximity of the room before the students arrive (similar to Lessons 1 and 2).
2. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will direct the students to freely explore the percussion or keyboard instruments of their choice through unguided play for the first five minutes of the session. The teacher will serve as a resource and facilitator to students' learning. This should be achieved

by walking the perimeter of the room to ensure consistent close proximity to each student, and asking students questions about the instruments and encourage different ways to play them.

3. **[2-3 minutes]** The teacher will request that every student find one partner who is playing an instrument from another family (students playing percussion instruments should find a keyboard student and vice versa). In the case of an odd number of students, the teacher should fill in where necessary.
4. **[4 minutes]** Once every student has a partner, the teacher will request that they sit down on the floor. The teacher will then describe the rules for the next musical game: each pair of partners will play a call-and-response duet, starting with the percussion player. The only rule is to play on the beat with the metronome (subdivisions can be smaller depending on the rhythmic capabilities of the students). Resting is allowed. The keyboard player can play any pitches they choose as long as the rhythm is the same. The teacher will provide an example of the game by beatboxing the percussion "call" with the metronome and "responding" by playing the keyboard instrument. This should assist students in understanding the rules of the game.
5. **[6 minutes]** The teacher will choose a pair of partners to play the game first. The rest of the students will travel around the room with the teacher to demonstrate their active listening skills. Proceed to the next game once every pair of partners has played.
6. The teacher will ask the students to find a new partner.
7. **[6 minutes]** The teacher will describe the rules of the next game, *What's in a Name?* (Agrell, 2006): two partners will make music based on the rhythms of their names. Keyboard players are allowed to use any pitch from C Major (or "white keys on the keyboard"). Like the previous game, pairs of partners will take turns performing for the teacher and rest of the class.

8. **[5 minutes]** The teacher will direct students to draw a picture that describes how they felt about playing music through games. Students will also write a paragraph that describes what they felt was challenging as well as what they loved about the curriculum. Students will hand their papers to the teacher upon exiting the class.

Assessment

a. The teacher will observe students play an improvised duet using a mix of unpitched percussion and keyboard instruments in time with the metronome.

b. The teacher will observe students improvise music based on a rhythm derived from the syllables in their names.

c. The teacher will observe students showcase signs of active listening while other students engage in improvisational play. Students should not be holding conversations with others or making sounds out of turn while the games are being played.

d. The teacher will evaluate the pictures and words that the students used to depict their feelings about the curriculum. In activities of musical play, the teacher should look for responses that relate to positive emotions (e.g., joy, happiness, excitement, fun, etc.). The teacher should compare submissions from the past lessons to track the consistency or trajectory of students' affect in relation to the lessons.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Purpose of the Practicum

The purpose of this practicum was to create eight lesson plans that use musical games to teach improvisation, collaboration, and re-contextualize 'play' in music. The goal of these lessons was to facilitate opportunities for students to play improvised music alone and with others. This section will relate previous research literature to the practicum that was developed and provide an analysis of the lesson plans through the lens of Schiro's (2013) Learner Centered ideology from his *Curriculum Theory* framework.

John et al. (2016) found that guided musical play that the teacher initiated and concluded, such as games, and unguided or "creative" musical play were a way to evoking positive emotions and social responses from music students. It was through using both of these forms of musical play that this curriculum was developed. Games were a foundational part of this curriculum. Not only do games have the benefit of evoking positive emotional responses, but they can do so concurrently with engaging music students in improvisation. A small segment of unguided musical play was integral to every lesson. Time for free exploration—an activity that John et al. (2016) identified as an unguided form of musical play—was prioritized in each lesson through "play centers," which allow the students to curiously investigate the capabilities of the unpitched percussion and keyboard instruments. Perhaps free exploration is most important because middle school music students may start to develop an idea of music as a discipline through practice. Although this is true, it may be possible that some students begin to perceive music-making as an obligation rather than an activity that elicits positive emotional responses.

Likewise, Berger and Cooper (2003) found that musical play could be enabled if music teachers provided time students to explore musical instruments. Furthermore, they also found

that musical play could be enhanced if students are given positive reinforcement. This finding is consistent with Madura Ward-Steinman's (2014) study, which found that improvisation is most successfully taught when students feel safe in the learning environment. Musical games that engage students in free improvisation are the primary method through which a safe learning environment is established. Arguably, educators should always strive to give positive reinforcement or encouragement when a student does or attempts something desirable but objective feedback is purposely excluded throughout this curriculum. Instead, Hickey's (2015) study provides insight to free improvisation pedagogues' use of descriptive and subjective feedback. Rather than students being told whether they are performing the rights notes, rhythms, and dynamics, which are all at the discretion of the musician in a free improvisation, students can engage with subjective feedback that assists them in describing the musical decisions they made. The assessment methods presented in each lesson plan were developed with this idea in mind. In sum, with the use of musical games and descriptive feedback, students can feel safe and encouraged and safe with partaking in free improvisation.

The themes that Hickey (2015) identified among free improvisation pedagogues were also used in these lessons, in particular "vocabulary," "feedback," "pedagogue as performer," and "leader as guide." The themes of "vocabulary" and "feedback," as previously described, were symbiotic in their utilization in these lesson plans. The teacher is instructed to play the musical games alongside the students when possible. As a result, the teacher is viewed as a performer who takes part in the music-making with the students rather than directing them from the outside. Likewise, the teacher for these lesson plans can be perceived as a guide rather than a director of an ensemble or music program. The teacher for these lesson plans is directed to use discussions and questions to guide the students rather than teaching through transmission.

Hickey's (2009) suggested that free improvisation is a form of music that is mostly learner-directed. Experience with free improvisation was argued to be more important that being taught through methods of transmission. In addition to facilitating a safe learning environment through games and subjective feedback, these lessons provide the "throw them in the deep end" approach that Hickey (2009) suggested were the most effective in teaching free improvisation and perhaps improvisation in general.

Schiro's (2013) *Curriculum Theory* outlines a framework of four major curricular ideologies: Social Efficiency, Scholar Academic, Learner Centered, and Social Reconstruction. This practicum mostly aligned with the Learner Centered ideology. The goal of a Learner Centered curriculum is concerned with the "growth of individuals with his or her own unique intellectual, social, emotional, and physical attributes" (p. 26). Educators who follow this ideology are responsible for creating the contexts, environments, and activities that will stimulate growth in students as they construct meaning for themselves. Students can construct meaning for themselves by interacting with other students, teachers, ideas, and things.

The unguided and guided forms of musical play that enable students to spontaneously investigate and imagine musical instruments and ideas are learner centered in their nature. Instead of students interpreting music from another composer, students are free to make their own musical decisions that guide their musical growth. Furthermore, students are also free to choose the instruments they play, how they play them, and the directions the musical games go.

The three roles of a teacher within the context of a Learner Centered classroom are as follows: observer and diagnostician of learners, provider of the environment for learning, and facilitator of learning (Schiro, 2013). The teacher fulfills all three of these roles in some capacity

throughout these lesson plans. As a diagnostician, the teacher will continually observe the students in musical improvisations and will provide the students with descriptive and subjective feedback as it relates to the sounds and musical decisions they are making. This subjective feedback is important in providing a non-judgmental method of discussing the musical choices students make, which are also outlined in Hickey's (2015) study of pedagogical themes used by free improvisation pedagogues. The teacher also provides the learning environment by designing it with social and material considerations in order to provide students with musical experiences that will stimulate their musical growth. The provision of musical instruments to explore and a social environment in which students can play collaborative musical games is perhaps the most foundational responsibility the teacher has in these lesson plans. Lastly, the teacher will function as a facilitator to students during their learning. Support through verbal encouragement and proximity is crucial to students' success in creative activities that may be new to them. The teacher for these lesson plans also use questions as a method to guide students to take think about and play music with unexplored creative directions in how they respond to the games' rules, prompts, and stimuli.

Implications and Future Study

Pedagogical Implications

The eight lessons in this practicum were scaffolded in such a way that they could engage students in collaborative music-making. In addition to building improvisational skills through collaboration, this curriculum was designed in this way because the students these lessons were designed for might experience discomfort with the unfamiliarity of this form of music-making. Students from 15 to 18 years of age that have obtained experience with free improvisation and improvisation in general may be more stimulated by activities that allow for musical play in a

solo context. Furthermore, students in this age demographic are likely to demonstrate more advanced musical capabilities and knowledge. Consequently, musical games that encourage students to improvise music in more complex time signatures and in a variety of musical styles could challenge these older music students. Music theory concepts (such as scale modes, extended chords, intervallic patterns, etc.) can be used as tools to develop more musical games for students to improvise with.

Although researchers have identified a close relationship between music learning and play (Berger & Cooper, 2003; John et al., 2016), resources for combining music teaching and games are still very limited. This practicum developed eight lesson plans for beginning level music learners. The teaching methods and materials were designed for younger students, mostly from 10 to 14 years of age. Therefore, in order to offer playful music courses for students at different levels, more age-appropriate resources should be developed. Music teachers and early childhood teachers can cooperate more closely in the future to explore teaching materials that have value for both music teaching and early childhood teaching.

Koops and Taggart (2011) wrote an article about integrating play into undergraduate and graduate music education. They also offered examples of how coursework, socialization, and research can be developed on the foundation of play in higher education. Koops and Taggart (2011) identified a playful frame of mind as a way in which students can generate more creative ideas. In addition to using improvisation games in college courses such as music theory, composition games can also be developed to encourage students to create through the lens of play. In order to increase teachers ’competence and confidence for implementing playful music curricula, they must have opportunities to engage in a “playful” music education in their pre-service

teacher training. In doing so, students will have more models of playful teachers, which remain few (Blatner & Blatner, 1988).

Teacher preparation programs should not only offer pre-service teachers opportunities to engage in play, but also develop their knowledge and skills in facilitating experiences with musical improvisation, in particular free improvisation, and informal teaching strategies. Wright and Kanellopolous (2010) conducted a study that explored how improvisation can be conceived as an informal music education process and how a course in free improvisation impacted preservice teachers' perceptions of both themselves and children as musicians. Hickey's (2015) study found eight distinct themes emerge from four free improvisation pedagogues: (1) teacher tools, (2) vocabulary, (3) physical teaching space, (4) feedback, (5) leader as guide, (6) comfort with spontaneity, (7) psychological space, and (8) pedagogue as performer. These characteristics can offer a more informal and democratic pedagogical approach that are unique to free improvisation pedagogues. Thus, if pre-service teachers encountered this method of teaching and music-making in their education, they would have additional experience and knowledge to inform their K-12 teaching practices. Although this practicum is merely a start to imagining new ways to engage music students in free improvisation, the frame of play complements these experiences through providing a safe learning environment in which students can feel creative alongside the teacher.

Research Implications

The effect of these eight music lesson plans on students 'development of musical skills and their emotional responses to playful music learning should be tested in the future. Case study designs can be helpful in understanding how students' attitudes and prosocial behaviors change after undergoing these eight lessons compared to students who learn improvisation through more traditional methods. Researchers may conduct case studies on how students feel about practicing

their instrument after undergoing a playful curriculum. Qualitative research methods can also be helpful in providing insight to how students feel about themselves and their peers as musicians and sound in general after experiencing free improvisation activities.

Phenomenological studies can provide a glimpse into students' worldview of free improvisation and play. How has their relationship with sound or music changed? What did they feel in these kinds of settings that differ from a more structured experience? Social epistemological research can provide a glimpse into how students learn music content together in a playful music curriculum using free improvisation. Historical research may investigate how have teaching practices evolved to account for play over time, if or how free improvisation has been offered in K-12 schools and higher education.

There are far more studies related to composition than improvisation, especially investigating how children develop improvisational skills. In order to measure and track the development of students' improvisational skills, reliable assessment methods and frameworks must be created and tested. Furthermore, music education researchers must not only agree on a precise definition for "improvisation" but also how it should be measured and assessed in different contexts such as the styles of jazz, baroque, and free improvisation.

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